4.5 Personal statement advice

The personal statement of the UCAS form helps us to assess the nature of the applicant’s interest in the academic subject and is an important part of the selection process. Accurate spelling and grammar are of paramount importance. It is essential that applicants take this opportunity to demonstrate their enthusiasm and aptitude for the academic subject, in addition to their potential to contribute more widely to the School. This assessment will form part of the basis on which decisions are made. We wish to hear about:

- Interest in and commitment to the subject
- Social and cultural awareness
- Responsibility
- Non-academic interests and activities

The following examples are not exhaustive, and are designed as a guide, rather than a formal set of criteria.

Demonstrated interest in and commitment to the subject
The main focus of your personal statement should be course specific. Applicants should demonstrate that they have strong motivation for choosing the degree applied for and have taken steps to investigate what the degree entails. Applicants should normally be expected to identify what particular aspects of the degree programme are of interest and how it relates to their current academic programme. Applicants might support this through reference to wider reading, or understanding of current affairs. In addition applicants should also aim to be able to report some direct experience and understanding of legal practice or the criminal justice system (for example through work experience or ‘shadowing’ or through attending a court hearing) and what they have learnt from their experience. We are aware of the difficulties that students may experience in obtaining ‘work experience’ and applicants will not be disadvantaged on the basis of a lack of this kind of experience.

Social and cultural awareness
Given the diversity within the University community, it is useful for applicants to have some experience beyond their immediate environment. Many applicants gain this insight through part-time employment, voluntary work, work experience, organised community schemes, and travel. Activities connected to, and independent of school/college, are given equal merit.

Responsibility
All the degree programmes offered by the School of Law require students to demonstrate personal responsibility for their learning and lead to professional careers where individual practitioners carry significant responsibility to their clients, or within their organisation. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that they have begun to develop this aspect of their character. Demonstration of responsibility through paid employment, volunteering, within school, and through family, caring or leisure activities is desirable.

Non-academic interests and activities
The School believes that people who have developed interests outside their academic studies and who try to lead a balanced life are more likely to contribute to the University community in its broadest sense. Successful applicants will have found time to pursue non-academic interests whilst still meeting the necessary academic requirements. The nature of those interests is a very personal matter, but successful applicants will describe potentially verifiable evidence of such achievements in, for example, community service, paid employment, performing arts or sports.